

Fact Sheet:

Informal/Family Caregivers

Overview

The terms informal caregiver and family caregiver refer to unpaid people, such as family members, friends and neighbors, who provide care.



What is the estimated value of informal caregiving?

Family caregiving is a critical piece of our long-term care system. In fact, family and other unpaid caregivers provide nearly 80% of all long-term care in this country.

Nationally, nearly one out of every four households (22.4 million households) is involved in caregiving to someone over the age of 50.

Fifty-two million informal and family caregivers provide care to someone aged 20+ who is ill or disabled. Nearly 30 million family caregivers provide personal assistance to adults with a disability or chronic illness. Nearly seven million Americans are long-distance caregivers for older relatives.

Just over half of all caregivers for persons aged 50+ are employed full-time and almost two-thirds are employed either full- or part-time.

Caregivers spend an average of 4.5 years providing care. The majority provides unpaid assistance for one to 4 years; 20% provide care for 5 years or longer.

The care provided by family members helps people with illness or chronic disability to stay in their own homes and communities. This family care reduces the costs incurred by Washington State, faced with the challenge of paying for long-term care for low-income residents.

In Washington State, more than 540,000 family caregivers are helping adults who have chronic illnesses or serious disabilities.

More men are assuming the caregiving role. It's estimated that there are 216,000 male caregivers in Washington State

If the services provided by informal caregivers had to be replaced with paid services, it would cost an estimated \$196 billion per year.

Researchers estimate that the cost of informal caregiving in terms of lost productivity to US businesses is \$11.4 billion annually.

Each year in Washington State, family caregivers provide 502,900,000 hours of care, at a value of over \$4 billion.

Impact on caregiver health

A study of older spousal caregivers found that caregivers who experience mental or emotional strain have a 63% higher risk of dying than non-caregivers. Other studies show that an estimated 46% - 59% of caregivers are clinically depressed.

Stress in family caregivers is inversely correlated to income: the less income a caregiver has, the more stress he or she is likely to experience.

Caregivers use prescription drugs for depression, anxiety and insomnia two to three times as often as the rest of the population.

Caring for an ill family member can be physically demanding and exhausting, and can leave the caregiving feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, or fearful. Research has shown that caregiver stress, alcohol or substance abuse, and emotional and/or financial problems are factors in many instances of elder abuse.

Caregiver Support and Assistance

About one-half of primary caregivers provide care with no outside assistance whatsoever.

Only an estimated 10% to 20% of family caregivers use formal services through public or private agencies.

Why support family caregivers?

Family caregivers are experiencing change. An increasing number of women now work outside the home. Families' geographic mobility and a decrease in family size means there are fewer family members around to share in caregiving tasks. And, 44% of the sandwich generation – Americans between the ages of 45 and 55 – currently experience both sides of the caregiving spectrum with children under 21 as well as living parents, in-laws, or both.

In 1990, there were eleven potential caregivers for each person needing care. By 2050, that ratio will be 4:1.

Despite the complexities of everyday life, families want to stay involved. Research indicates that in some cases families continue caregiving even at the expense of their own health and well-being.

Studies suggest that relatively low-cost supportive services for family caregivers can not only reduce the stress experienced by family caregivers, but can result in delayed nursing home placement for the person needing care.

Washington State's Respite Care Services Program

The Respite Care Services Program has served family caregivers throughout Washington State since 1989 and has an annual budget of \$2,757,724. The program targets family and other unpaid caregivers assisting adults with a functional disability. Respite services are provided both in-home and in residential and adult day services settings on a planned or on an emergency basis.

Washington State's Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP)

"The caregiver specialist helped arrange services when I thought there were none available ... she has tackled some hefty research jobs for me ... I can't tell you how much it means to me to hear her voice on the other end of the phone.

This has been a life saver."

Started in October 2000, this program offers:

- Information about services
- Assistance in gaining access to services
- Caregiver support groups and counseling
- Caregiver training and education
- Respite Care
- Supplemental Services

DSHS' Aging and Disability Services Administration administers the program that is implemented locally by Area Agencies on Aging. State legislation provides an annual budget of \$631,652.

Also in 2000, the National Family Caregiver Support Program was authorized as a new program of the Older Americans Act. This program brings \$2,772,072 into Washington State to support family caregivers of older adults. This program also serves kinship caregivers -- relatives, age 60 or older, caring for children under the age of 19 as well as older caregivers caring for children with a developmental disability. To find the program in your area, go to www.aasa.dshs.wa.gov or call toll-free 1- 800-422-3263.

Washington State Relatives as Parents Program

The Relatives as Parents Program website

<http://parenting.wsu.edu/relative/index.htm> provides information on support groups and kinship resource guides, a video lending library, media coverage, and links to other related websites.

An estimated 35,341 grandparents in WA State are the primary caregivers raising their grandchildren. In addition, aunts, uncles and other relatives are also raising children. The greatest issues facing kinship caregivers in WA State include: financial needs, legal and bureaucratic barriers, social service needs and information gaps.

Currently more than 40 support groups are available to grandparents and relatives who are raising children.

A new **Kinship Caregivers Support Program**, funded by the WA State Legislature in 2004, provides one time only financial assistance to kinship caregivers (of any age) who are in greatest need. Contact your local Information and Assistance office or call 1-800-422-3263 to find out where to find this local program.

A useful publication; ***Relatives as Parents Program-A Resource Guide for Relatives Raising Children in Washington State***, which provides information on public and private resources is available by going to www.prt.wa.gov, clicking on General Store and locating publication number DSHS 22-996X.

A June 2002 legislative study, **Kinship Care in Washington State: Prevalence, Policy and Needs**, was developed by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy. For a copy call 360/586-2677 or locate it at <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/childfamily/FosterCare.html>.

Area Agency on Aging
Contacts for Family
Caregiver Support
Programs:

Olympic Area Agency on Aging (Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, and Pacific Counties) Ginny Adams 360/379-5064

Northwest Washington Area Agency on Aging (Island, San Juan, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties) Kim Boon, 360/676-6749

Snohomish County Long Term Care and Aging Division (Snohomish County) John Peterson 425/388-7307

Aging and Disability Services (King County) Margaret Casey 206/684-0662

Pierce County Aging and Long Term Care (Pierce County) Connie Kline 253/798-3782

Lewis/Mason/Thurston Area Agency on Aging (Lewis, Mason, and Thurston Counties) Carrie Petit 360/664-3162 x147

Southwest Washington Agency on Aging (Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Skamania, and Wahkiakum Counties) Kristrun Grondal 360/694-6577

Aging & Adult Care of Central Washington (Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Lincoln, and Okanogan Counties) Lori Kostors 509/886-0700

Southeast Washington Aging and Long Term Care (Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Kittitas, Yakima, and Walla Walla Counties) Laurie Camp 509/965-0105

Yakama Nation Area Agency on Aging (Yakama Reservation) Marie Miller 509/509-865-7164

Aging & Long Term Care of Eastern Washington (Ferry, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman Counties) Debi Levin-Stankevich 509/458-2509

Colville Indian Area Agency on Aging (Colville Reservation) Reva Desautel 509/634-2759

Kitsap County Division of Aging & Long Term Care (Kitsap County) Tawnya Weintraub 360/337-7068

For more copies of this **Fact Sheet**,
call 360/725-2495

To find more information about caregiving or to order the free *Caregivers' Handbook*,
go to www.adsa.dshs.wa or call toll-free 1-800-422-3263.